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MAYOR HUGH O'BRIEN'S 1877 SPEECH ON BOSTON PARKS

With an Introductory Essay
on Hugh O'Brien,
Boston's First Irish Mayor

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HUGH O'BRIEN AND PATRICK MAGUIRE: MOSES AND AARON AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF FRANKLIN PARK

I.

No other Boston mayor is more identified with Franklin Park than Mayor Hugh O'Brien, the first Irish mayor of Boston.

The main reason for this is the famous speech reprinted in this issue of The Franklin Park Coalition Bulletin when O'Brien was chairman of The Special Committee on Parks as a city Alderman. On November 9, 1876, The Common Council passed an order providing for a joint committee (with The Board of Aldermen) to reach a compromise decision on the propriety and feasibility of immediate action on Parks for Boston.

Alderman O'Brien devoted several minutes of his speech to The Committee on the significance of the proposed West Roxbury Park. No scheme for parks, he stated, would be complete without this great park.

At the time he was Alderman, and throughout his years as mayor, O'Brien lived at 2886 Washington Street at the corner of Townsend Street. His 2½ story wood house was in the middle of the Roxbury district of Boston. One reason why O'Brien strongly supported the West Roxbury site for the huge central park proposed by F. L. Olmsted and the Park Commissioners in their 1876 Report was that Roxbury would benefit the most by this park. Roxbury was on the edge of an enormous building boom and population growth that would last nearly fifty years.

O'Brien was well aware of the growth of his district and went to great pains in his speech to urge the Boston leadership

to anticipate this growth and plan for parks while the land was still relatively cheap.[1]

O'Brien was an Alderman for eleven years,[2] the last four of which he was chairman of the Board. In December of 1884, he was elected mayor of Boston, the first Irish-Catholic mayor in the city's history. O'Brien was swept into office by a reform Democratic movement led by Grover Cleveland, who was elected for his first term as United States President in November, 1884.

Geoffrey Blodget wrote of O'Brien's ideological impact on the Boston political landscape that

> "The bulky bearded ghost of Mayor Hugh O'Brien looms in the folk memory of Boston Irish like some minor Moses, who came to lead his people from Yankee bondage."[3]

Boston Brahmins and Yankee businessmen braced themselves as Mayor Moses entered Old City Hall on School Street in January, 1885. So did Frederick Law Olmsted. Although progressive if not prophetic in his theories and views on city planning, these theories were deeply rooted in classic 19th century liberalism: the well educated and well born would do things

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1. O'Brien's house and the one he owned adjoining it facing Townsend Street were torn down for The Washington Park Urban Renewal Project about 1966. Academy Houses II sits on the site.

2. Elected first in 1875, the same year the first Board of Park Commissioners was selected.

3. Geoffrey Blodget, The Gentle Reformers: Massachusetts Democrats in the Cleveland Era, Cambridge, 1966, p. 61.

for the masses, not with them and certainly without communicating with them. That an immigrant printer was now to direct policy of park development in Boston was disturbing to Olmsted.

H.W.S. Cleveland, a well-known Massachusetts landscape architect working in Chicago, replied to Olmsted in a March, 1885 letter:

> "It gave me a sickening sensation to read your account...it is enough to make the old Bostonians of past generations turn in their graves to think of the city being given over to Irish domination."[4]

When O'Brien dissolved the original Board of Park Commissioners and set up his own Board, Olmsted wrote, "men less interested in the parks as parks it would be hard to find."[5]

Olmsted's fears were not entirely groundless. When the new Board of Park Commissioners took office on May 1, 1885, chief among them was none other than Patrick Maguire, pre-eminent Irish political boss of the city. No mayor for the past decade had been elected without Maguire's support and the thousands of Irish votes he had to deliver. Maguire had become rich due to land speculation in south Boston and in real estate in Roxbury (mainly in Grove Hall where he built a fine home about 1890, 3/5th of a mile from Franklin Park).

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4. H.W.S. Cleveland to Olmsted, March 12, 1885. Olmsted Papers, Library of Congress. Quoted in "Frederick Law Olmsted; Landscape Architecture as Conservation Reform; Geoffrey Blodgett, Journal of American History, March, 1976, p. 885.

5. Olmsted to Charles Eliot Norton, May 2, 1885. Quoted in Ibid. p. 885.

Secondly, in July of 1885, Olmsted's contract was rescinded. The general plan for Franklin Park had just been completed and Olmsted feared that Franklin Park would be jeopardized. In September, however, his contract was reviewed for three years under the same terms.[6]

On January 30, 1886, the Park Commissioners met in the field office of the Olmsted firm in Franklin Park. Mayor Hugh O'Brien was invited to what would be the first formal display of the General Plan of Franklin Park. Olmsted described the plan and it was adapted at the February 10th meeting of the park commissioners.[7]

It was a politically brilliant idea to invite Mayor O'Brien to this most important single meeting in Franklin Park's design history. All were aware of O'Brien's efforts as Alderman to break the logjam in city government to pass on the parkland procurement bill, and all were aware of how close Franklin Park was to the mayor's heart. The invitation may have been Olmsted's idea; he was usually tactful and diplomatic. One indication that he might have comes from his report, Notes on The Plan of Franklin Park. In describing the plan by divisions, he writes, "Country Park is a term used to mark the intended distinction of character between Franklin Park and other public grounds of the city in a

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6. Zaitzevsky, Cynthia, Frederick Law Olmsted and The Boston Park System, Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 67 and notes on p. 232.

7. Ibid., p. 68 and notes on p. 233. Olmsted's descriptions of the plan would later be turned into Notes on The Plan of Franklin Park published later in the year: Zaitzevsky.

report made by Alderman, now Mayor, O'Brien in 1877."[8]

II.

Hugh O'Brien surprised everyone, especially astonished Republican Yankees, when he set out to manage city government with economy, good sense and in a spirit of conciliation.

A glance at O'Brien's life would have been sufficient to predict this.

Hugh O'Brien immigrated to Boston from Ireland at the age of five in 1832. He lived in and went to school at Old Fort Hill, then a teeming tenement district for Irish immigrants and not the most healthful corner of town either.

He was a newspaper, book and job printer until he founded and published the Shipping and Commercial History, which he edited for the rest of his life.

Shipping was Boston's lifeblood and soul, particularly in the booming decades just before the Civil War.

O'Brien's newspaper was accurate and reliable and mercantile and commercial houses came to depend on it. Through his newspaper, O'Brien met the wealthiest and most prominent merchants of the city of Boston.

Wealthy men (and women) become rich by watching and anticipating political as well as business trends. One of those political trends was the growing strength of Irish politics which was housed in the Democratic City Committee. A member of that Committee since 1859 was Patrick Maguire. Like the Black Political

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8. Notes on The Plan of Franklin Park, 12th Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of The Department of Parks, for the year 1886, p. 49.

Task Force in Boston today, The Democratic City Committee was formed to give the Irish political power commensurate with their growing numbers in the city.

Anticipating the inevitable, the businessmen of Boston proposed Hugh O'Brien as an Alderman in the 1875 election of that Board which O'Brien won. O'Brien was a "safe Irishman"; one of their own; a businessman like them. O'Brien did not disappoint his business and commercial colleagues.

Also in 1875, Mayor Samuel Cobb appointed three leading Boston businessmen to be the first Park Commissioners of Boston, Charles H. Dalton, William Gray Jr., and T. Jefferson Coolidge.[9] In that year, too, Patrick Maguire was looking for a way to assert Irish political power, and in 1876 he persuaded the Democratic City Committee to back Yankee Democrat Frederick O. Prince. When Prince won the elections, Maguire's career as a political king pin was off and running, a position he never lost until he died in 1896.[10]

If O'Brien was the Moses of the Boston Irish, then Patrick Maguire was Aaron. Politicians, Yankee or Irish, Democrat or Republican, needed Irish votes to win, and Maguire delivered those votes. Maguire had so enhanced his power over Democratic votes

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9. T. (for Thomas) Jefferson Coolidge was the great grandson of Thomas Jefferson. Coolidge's grandmother was the third president's daughter, Martha. Charles Dalton was the Board Chairman. He and Olmsted were both on the U.S. Sanitary Commission during the Civil War. Dalton wrote the first Report of the Boston Park Commissioners, a major document in Boston parks history.

10. Prince returned the favor and gave many Irishmen jobs as policemen.

that he made a bold move in the mayoral election of 1883: he put up his close friend Hugh O'Brien as the first Irish Catholic candidate for mayor. O'Brien lost by 2,000 votes; Maguire's party newspaper The Republic cried bigotry but came closer to the truth when he wrote that O'Brien had been deserted by Democratic votes. O'Brien ran again in the 1884 election and this time won.[11]

Despite initial fears and anxieties by Brahmins and Republicans, Hugh O'Brien ran a tight fiscal city ship and made careful use of the spoils system. By the end of his first year, more than one hundred prominent Boston businessmen endorsed O'Brien for re-election in an advertisement in the Boston Post and Boston Advertiser.[12]

This Yankee seal of approval was exactly what O'Brien and Maguire were striving for. In Blodgett's words "Maguire's... main political ambition was to bring Boston's Irish Democrats into functional rapport with the party's Yankee elite. His service on the park commission coincided with that aim."[13]

But Patrick Maguire realized that O'Brien could not win a fifth term. Anti-Catholic bigotry, fanned by disgruntled Republicans, was building up and Maguire did not support his old friend. O'Brien lost the 1888 election.

Maguire always chose political harmony over factional strife. His goal was to benefit Irish-American Bostonians and if a Yankee could deliver jobs and city services, then a Yankee would be

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11. "Patrick J. Maguire: Boston's Last Democratic Boss," John T. Galvin, The New England Quarterly, Sept., 1982, p. 399.

12. December 14, 1885; Ibid., p. 400.

13. Blodget, "Olmsted...Conservative Reform," p. 885.

Maguire's man. In 1890 that Yankee was young progressive Nathan Mathews, the John Lindsey of his day. Maguire supported Matthews through three terms as mayor.

Maguire died in 1896 at the age of 59. Even the Republican Boston Transcript eulogized him in glowing terms.

O'Brien went back into business and until his death at 68 in 1895, he served as general manager of The Brush Electric Light Company. He moved in 1889 to 76 Commonwealth Avenue in the very fashionable Back Bay.

On January 26, 1889, Frederick Law Olmsted gave a speech to the New England Club which was in many ways a benediction on the administrations of Mayor Hugh O'Brien and Park Commissioner Patrick Maguire then ending,

> "Three years ago a political revolution occurred in the Park commission. Having been a republican it became a unanimously democratic board. Neither under the former republican nor the present democratic administration has a man been dismissed, or a man been enlisted in any class of employment, with any motive of serving a party, of rewarding party services or of punishing failure of party services...I do not think that there is another Park Department in the country, that has more successfully escaped the class of danger that I have been trying to explain... I do not think that at so early a stage any other park work

has come so nearly to be recognized and treated as a work of art."[14]

14. Remarks about a difficulty peculiar to the Park Department of City Government, 14th Annual Report of The Board of Park Commissioners, Department of Parks for the Year 1887, p. 48.

Postscript

The twentieth century has been dominated by Irish-Catholic mayors, with James Michael Curley replacing St. Botolph as the patron saint of Boston. The Yankees have fled to the North Shore, although they still direct the city's money centers by remote control.

Hugh O'Brien has rapidly receded into history and Patrick Maguire is long forgotten.

One of Maguire's successors, Park Commissioner Peter Meade, yanked Hugh O'Brien out of obscurity and organized a huge, black tie dinner dance on July 30, 1977 in Franklin Park to honor Hugh O'Brien in the centennial of his famous speech.

It was an astonishing event. Franklin Park in 1977 had suffered for over a decade with neglect, bad management and an increasingly poor reputation. The swift demographic shift from a white Jewish to a black community on two of the park's three residential districts struck apprehension in the hearts of white Bostonians. Franklin Park was the last place in Boston one would imagine for a black tie dinner dance.

Park Commissioner Peter Meade was no ordinary Park Commissioner. He was a charming, affable young man, 30 years old (when he took over the department) who had played a prominent role in managing Boston's school desegregation crisis in 1974 and 1975. As a reward, Mayor Kevin White gave Meade the job of Park Commissioner to replace the disgraced Anthony "Tough Tony" Forgione.

Commissioner Meade didn't do much to improve Franklin Park,

"Good evening and welcome to Roxbury," said Dr. Melnea Cass at the beginning of her remarks at the Hugh O'Brien dinner-dance. The event was held to commemorate Boston's first Irish mayor, Hugh O'Brien, and to reacquaint people with Boston's Franklin Park. Pictured (left to right) are: Mayor Kevin H. White, Dr. Melnea Cass, Peter Meade, Boston Parks and Recreation Commissioner, and John J. McCarthy, Director General of the Office of Parks and Public Works in Ireland.

Over 1,000 guests joined the city in paying tribute to Boston's first Irish mayor, Hugh O'Brien, who was a major force in the acquisition of Boston's parklands in the late nineteenth century. Here John McCarthy (left), the director of the Office of Parks and Public Works in Ireland, joins his Boston counterpart, Parks and Recreation Commissioner Peter Meade (right) in lively conversation. In the middle is Meade's wife Joan.

FROM THE JAMAICA PLAIN CITIZEN, AUGUST 4, 1977.

HUGH O'BRIEN COMMITTEE

The Honorable John W. McCormack
Dr. Melnea Cass
Dr. Michael Haynes
The Honorable Mario Umana
Miss Rose Walsh
Dr. Samuel Bass Warner

Mayor Kevin H. White
Commissioner Peter G. Meade

1877-1977
In commemoration of the
works of Mayor Hugh O'Brien

The Hugh O'Brien Committee
requests the pleasure of your company
at a dinner dance
on Saturday, the thirtieth of July
nineteen hundred and seventy-seven
at eight o'clock
Franklin Park

Black tie
RSVP by July 15, by mail only

INVITES YOU

but he made a huge effort to erase the racist attitudes that suffocated it. The Hugh O'Brien Dinner Dance was the way Commissioner Meade chose to put Franklin Park back on the map of Boston. He even invited Ireland's Director General of Parks and Public Works, The Honorable John J. McCarthy to be the guest of honor.

Many people saw other motivations. Although Meade made no attempt to eclipse the event, political writers saw the audacious dinner as Meade's coming out party into Boston politics. The talk of City Hall was that the entire event had been orchestrated by Meade for his political advantage.[1]

One writer saw a different slant: the night was also a way "to artificially transplant some political clout to a largely minority area with a low voter turnout."[2]

The rich and famous, the political nobility and the political sycophants as well as a few of the plebians[3] all came to the huge gala affair in July. When it was over, the Park reverted back to its nearly invisible state and Park Department maintenance services

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1. Boston Herald American, Sunday, July 24, 1977. Barbara Rabinwotiz, "Commentary," p. A7.

2. Boston Ledger, July 15, 1977. Peter Meade appointed the first Black to be Assistant commissioner, Robert McCoy. Mr. McCoy became Park Commissioner in 1982, the highest ranking Black in city government.

3. "The plebeian constituency in the Franklin Park area" was how Francis X. Quinn characterized the residents around the Park, Ledger, July 15, 1977.

continued along carelessly or not at all. And what of Hugh O'Brien? Hugh who? asked the wags.

Peter Meade did have other plans. He resigned in November of 1977 and went on to run unsuccessfully for Secretary of State for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.[4]

After the O'Brien Dinner, I went to the Boston Public Library to see Alderman O'Brien's famous speech.[5] As I sat in Bates Hall reading the speech a bronze bust of Mayor Hugh O'Brien stood on a pedestal behind my left shoulder, given to the Library in 1886.[6]

Richard Heath
Executive Director

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4. Meade's political mentor, former Mayor Kevin White, used the Secretary of State's office as a spring into City Hall in 1969. Meade was certainly going to attempt the same route. Meade today is in business but not entirely out of politics. He played an active role in the 1983 mayoral campaign managing one candidate's unsuccessful attempt to be the next Irish-American mayor of Boston.

5. The cornerstone of the Boston Public Library was laid in November, 1888 by Mayor Hugh O'Brien. Mayor Nathan Matthews presided over the opening ceremonies seven years later.

6. Michael Cunniff gave the bronze by John Donoghue, sculptor.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Tess Cederholm, of the Fine Arts Department, Boston Public Library for the source books on Hugh O'Brien's biography.

Mr. John T. Galvin very kindly sent me a copy of his rare article on Patrick Maguire, which was a source of fascinating information. He also read the manuscript.

Professor Geoffrey Blodgett's book The Gentle Reformers and his article, Landscape Architecture as Conservative Reform, are the two legs on which this essay stands. I owe Professor Blodgett a great debt in explaining the political environment in which Olmsted worked to create Franklin Park. Professor Blodgett kindly read the manuscript, too.

Landscape Architecture as Conservative Reform was written in response to the great, grand but woefully ineffective sesquecentennial of F. L. Olmsted's birth, celebrated in 1972. While the nation sang Olmsted's praises, nothing was done to restore, preserve, or even adequately maintain his great Parks. In Boston, where the party was formed by many academics, professionals and political leaders, the effect was virtually nothing. So inspired was Mayor Kevin White, for example, that he approved of the destruction of Franklin Park's magnificent Refectory building (opened on July 4, 1896) in 1976, the year of the Bicentennial.

Blodgett's intention in his article was to place Olmsted in the history he lived and worked through. Blodgett concludes with the observation that Olmsted believed in static and formal

social relations where people of various classes (and races) lived in a controlled public environment.

> [Olmsted] "underestimated the aggressive thrust of American pluralism. Meanwhile, Olmsted's parks remained as battered monuments to the imagination of their generation at its best, and also to the constraints of their democratic faith."

I don't share Professor Blodgett's pessimism (although in 1976 I may have). The very plebians (to use journalist Quinn's condescending word) that live around Franklin Park spearheaded the movement to restore and improve it and have done so with success for a dozen years. The constraints of the democratic faith are only as fast as the mind of man wants them to be, as Thomas Jefferson well knew and Frederick Law Olmsted too, I believe. After all, Jefferson's great grandson was a Boston park commissioner when Olmsted was advising on the first park plans in 1875.

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Bronze bust of Mayor Hugh O'Brien in Bates Hall, Boston Public Library.

PUBLIC PARKS.

SPEECH OF

ALDERMAN O'BRIEN,

in the

Board of Aldermen,

May 21, 1877.

BOSTON:
PRESS OF ROCKWELL AND CHURCHILL,
No. 39 ARCH STREET
c1877.

REPORT OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SUBJECT OF PARKS FOR BOSTON.

Boston, May 7, 1877.

The Joint Special Committee, to whom was referred so much of the Mayor's Inaugural Address as relates to Parks, have the honor to submit the following report:--

After careful consideration they have agreed upon the following propositions:--

1. Public Parks are necessary to the health and comfort of large cities, and they are made necessary by the same causes which make water-works, and systems of sewerage necessary.

2. In establishing a system of Parks the needs of the future should be looked to as well as the necessities of the present.

3. As the establishment of Parks requires a large expenditure of money, the benefit of which extends to the future as well as to the present, the expense should be distributed through a series of years, by means of loans and sinking funds, thus preventing the tax for any one year being onerous.

4. That Public Parks should extend special facilities to the poorer classes, who, living in narrow and crowded streets, which in summer are hot and unhealthy, stand in greatest need of the pure air, and opportunities for pleasant exercise, which Parks should afford.

5.* That the citizens of Boston desire that Public Parks, equal to the wants of a great and growing city, should be established; and in proof of this your committee refer to the steps that have led up to this report.

6. That after examining the several Parks and Park-ways recommended by the Commissioners, they believe that if the recommendations of the Commissioners are carried out, the City of Boston will have, in five years, a system of Parks which will add immensely to the comfort and pleasure of its citizens; and that in fifty years it will have as fine a system of Parks as any in this country or in the world.

7. That the several parts of the system have been so chosen and combined that the value of any one part, taken in connection with the others, is very much greater than it would be if standing alone; and how much greater this value is can only be appreciated by visiting the Parks in succession, and seeing how one fits into

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* See page 5.

another. The Charles River Embankment, for instance, on account of its connecting the poorest and most crowded part of the city with the country, and its beauty as a promenade and drive, and the great additional facilities for using the river for boating and pleasure purposes which it affords, is, perhaps, the Park of greatest local value; but, as a part of the system of Parks, its chief value is as the great avenue through which Charlestown and the North and West Ends find ready and pleasant access through the Back Bay Park to the country Parks in West Roxbury and to Brighton.

8. Finding, then, in the system of Parks recommended by the Commissioners everything that was desirable, but two questions remained to the committee:--

1. Can the city afford the entire system?

2. Is it expedient to commence the work now?

In the opinion of your committee, the city can afford the necessary expenditures, and the present is a peculiarly favorable time for commencing.

The City Engineer* has prepared estimates of the cost of constructing the Urban Parks, that is the Charles River Embankment, the Back Bay Park, and the South Bay Park, which, from their situation, must be first put in order.

His estimates are as follows:--

Charles River Park	$2,684,000
Back Bay Park	1,625,800
South Bay Park	200,000
Cost of land as per Park Commissioners' report for all Parks and Park-ways	4,906,600
Total	$9,416,400

As before stated, your committee are of opinion that this expenditure should be provided for as in the case of water works, by the sale of thirty-year bonds and the establishment of Sinking Funds, which, by means of annual contributions, will provide means for paying the debt at maturity; Boston 5% bonds can be sold at a sufficient premium, so that the sale of $9,000,000 of bonds will provide for the above expenditure; and this will give the

* Joseph P. Davis

City of Boston the land for all the Parks and Park-ways, and will put in order the three parks named.

In answering the question, "Can the city afford the above expenditure?" the committee looked to the effect upon the tax-payer, i.e. what would be the increase on the tax-bills; and they find that to pay the principal and interest of the $9,000,000 loan will require an annual tax of eighty-three cents on the thousand dollars on the present assessed valuation of the city. It must be remembered that the entire expenditure will not be finished for a number of years, and that the annual tax for the present will only be a little over nine cents on a thousand dollars for each million of bonds issued.

If Boston cannot afford such an expenditure to secure the priceless benefit of Parks, it must be because she has entered the ranks of cities like Newburyport and Salem, which have ceased to grow. If twenty years from now our wharves are to be deserted, our manufactories idle, our streets grass-grown, then indeed it is unwise to enter upon this or any scheme calling for an outlay of money; but if Boston is to increase in wealth and population, as we believe she is, there can be no question but that we can well afford all the money necessary to give us this system of Parks.

In regard to the additional cost of putting the remaining Parks in order, it must be remembered that this must be the work of years; and sums which in the total look enormous will, when separated into the annual appropriations, be easy enough to pay.

An annual appropriation, in addition to the above loan, equal to that now made for the City Hospital, will, in thirty years, complete the entire system of Parks; and we believe that the value of the Parks to the health of the city will be as great as even that beneficent institution.

The second question, "Is it expedient to commence the work now?" can be answered much more briefly.

At present land, labor, and materials, everything which enters into the cost of Parks, is unusually cheap, and our business interests are so depressed that a million dollars thrown into the channels of trade may make the difference between profit and loss on the year's business. Now, if the present scheme is adopted, our laborers and mechanics will find work, which, unlike that on the water-works, will cause them to live in the city; this will enable the owners of houses to let their tenements, the retail dealers will find customers with money to pay them; they, in their turn, pass on the benefit to others, so that all will be helped.

Your committee therefore recommend that the Treasurer be authorized to sell one million dollars of bonds, to run for the

longest legal term, the proceeds thereof to be expended by the Park Commissioners in the purchase of such lands, being part of the system of Parks recommended by said Commissioners, as will be sold to the city on the most favorable terms; and for this purpose they recommend the adoption of the following orders.

HUGH O'BRIEN,
JOHN T. CLARK,
ROBERT M. THOMPSON.

Ordered, that the sum of one million dollars be and hereby is appropriated for the purchase of lands for Public Parks, --said land to be purchased by the Park Commissioners.

Ordered, That the Treasurer be and he hereby is authorized to borrow, under the direction of the Committee on Finance, the sum of one million dollars for the purchase of lands for Park purposes; the certificates of indebtedness to run for the longest term of years allowed by law, not exceeding thirty years, and to bear interest at a rate not exceeding five per centum per annum.

A joint Special Committee was appointed in 1869 "to consider what action should be taken by the City Government to purchase and lay out a Public Park." The committee gave two public hearings, and the information and suggestions received were printed with the report of the committee in City Document No. 123 of 1869. June 20, 1870, an order was passed authorizing the printing of 8,000 copies of the Public Park bill for general distribution.

November 8, 1870, the question of accepting the act entitled "An Act for the laying out of one or more Public Parks in or near the city of Boston," was submitted to the people. The whole number of ballots cast in favor of the acceptance of the act was 9,233. The whole number cast against such acceptance was 5,916. Two-thirds of all the ballots cast not being in favor of said act, it was accordingly rejected.

December 29, 1870, an order was passed authorizing the Mayor to petition the Legislature for the passage of an act authorizing the purchase or taking of lands for Public Parks in Boston, or its immediate vicinity. An order was also passed requesting the Mayor, and Alexander H. Rice, William Gaston, B. W. Harris, A. M. Giles, Jarvis D. Braman, P. A. Collins, Henry S. Washburn and John P. Healey to act as Commissioners to prepare a draft of the bill.

March 16, 1871, Commissioners submitted to the City Council a draft of a bill prepared by them, and an order was offered authorizing the Committee on Legislative Matters to recommend its adoption by the Legislature. The Common Council refused to concur in the passage of this order, and passed an order requesting the Mayor to withdraw the petition for authority to establish Parks, which was not concurred in by the Board of Aldermen.

November 6, 1873, an order was introduced in the Common Council, providing for the appointment of a Joint Special Committee, to be called the "Committee on Public Works," to consider and report upon the "Expediency of laying out a Public Park upon a scale befitting the present public demand and the prospective increase in area and population by additional annexation of cities and towns to Boston." When this order reached the Board of Aldermen a substitute was offered, requesting the Mayor to petition the Legislature for an act authorizing the City Council or Commissioners appointed by the Mayor to purchase or otherwise take lands in Boston or its vicinity for the purpose of laying out one large Park or several small Parks. After considerable discussion the whole subject was indefinitely postponed.

In 1874, the Mayor, in his inaugural address, called attention to the subject of establishing Parks, and the matter was referred to a special commission, consisting of the Mayor, two Aldermen, three members of the Common Council, and three citizens at large. This commission reported December 3, 1874, recommending, among other things, that application be made to the next Legislature for the power to take lands for Parks and their connecting roadways, and for authority to assess betterments.

In his inaugural address for 1875 the Mayor again called attention to the subject, and recommended that suitable tracts of land be secured by the city at an early day.

April 5, 1875, an order was passed authorizing the Mayor to petition for an act authorizing the city to purchase, or otherwise take, lands within the limits of the city for the purpose of laying out public Parks, etc., provided that the act should not take effect unless accepted by a majority of the legal voters present, and voting thereon at meetings duly called for that purpose in the several wards at a special election to be called for that purpose.

The Legislature passed the act (see City Doc. No. 61, 1875) under which the proposed system of Parks had been laid out, and, at a special election, held June 9, 1875, it was accepted by the people. Yeas, 3,706; nays, 2,311.

July 6, 1875, the Mayor appointed T. Jefferson Coolidge, Charles H. Dalton, and William Gray, Jr., to be the Commissioners provided for in the act, and they were confirmed July 15, 1875.

The first report of the Park Commission was presented January 10, 1876 (City Document No. 12, 1876). It was simply a report of progress, stating that they had given public hearings upon various propositions submitted to them, and to some extent had conducted surveys of territory. March 20 a petition was presented to the City Council, signed by Jordan, Marsh & Co., George C. Richardson & Co., William Claflin & Co., May & Co., and 720 others, praying for early action upon the matters of drainage and public Parks.

The second report of the Commissioners (City Document No. 42, 1876) was presented April 24, 1876, and referred to the Committee on Common and Public Grounds. June 15 a communication was received from Mr. Joseph S. Ropes, transmitting a series of resolutions adopted at the public meeting in Faneuil Hall, June 7, in favor of the early establishment of Public Parks as recommended by the Commissioners. The Committee on Common, etc., reported June 26 (City Document No. 72, 1876), recommending that the plan of the Commissioners be adopted, and that the City Treasurer be authorized to borrow $4,962,000 for the purchase or taking of lands. At the meeting of the Board of Aldermen, July 10, petitions were received from S. H. Walley and 287 others;

George Wheatland, Jr., and 190 others; C. B. Goodrich and 530 others, and M. P. Wilder and 55 others, in favor of immediate action on the subject.

At the same meeting an order was passed recommitting their report to the Commissioners, "with instructions to bond such tracts of land as they may select for Park purposes, within the limits already reported by them, or elsewhere, and to report the same from time to time to the City Council, specifying the number of acres, the names of the owners, and the estimated expense of the purchase." The Common Council concurred in the passage of this order July 13, 1876. July 3, 1876, a memorial was presented to the City Council, signed by Moses A. Dow and other residents of Charlestown District, in favor of a Public Park in that section of the city. This memorial was referred to the Park Commissioners, and, September 25th, they reported upon it, asking to be discharged from further consideration of the petition. This report is printed on page 527 of the reports of the proceedings of the City Council for 1876. October 2, 1876, the Park Commissioners submitted their fourth report (City Document No. 88, 1876), giving the result of their attempts to bond land. The report was referred to the Committee on Common and Public Grounds, who reported back to the Common Council, November 9th (City Document No. 97, 1876), renewing their recommendation that a loan be authorized. The Common Council, at its meeting November 16th, refused the order authorizing a loan a second reading.

At the same meeting the Common Council passed an order providing for the appointment of a Joint Special Committee, consisting of two members of the Common Council and one Alderman, to confer with the Park Commissioners for the purpose of considering the whole subject of Public Parks, and the laws under which their establishment is proposed, and report their conclusions upon the propriety and feasibility of immediate action. At the same meeting the committee on the part of the Council was appointed, and at its meeting, November 20, the Board of Aldermen concurred in the passage of the order and joined the committee. The committee reported December 28 (City Document No. 105, 1876), and the subject was referred to the next City Government.

In 1877 so much of the Mayor's inaugural address as related to Public Parks was referred to a Joint Special Committee, consisting of two Aldermen and three members of the Common Council, whose report is now presented to the City Council.

SPEECH.

As Chairman of the Special Committee on Parks, I desire to submit a few remarks in connection with the reports already submitted by this committee. The most important measures that the City Government has ever been called upon to consider were a full supply of pure water, a complete and perfect system of sewerage, and public Parks for breathing places, for recreation, and for sanitary purposes. These three measures no large city can overlook or dispense with, and if we fail to provide them for our large and growing population, we fail in the performance of our duty. By a hard struggle water was introduced. No public improvement ever met with greater opposition. But, in the introduction of water, the short-sighted policy of the City Government only looked ahead a few years, and not long since the city was threatened with a water famine, and was forced to provide an increased supply. In the mean time our business suffered, and large manufacturers, who would to-day be employing thousands of men, were driven from our city, because our water was so scarce it could not be sold for manufacturing purposes. Since it has been sold, the price has been so high, many of our manufacturers could not afford to use it and compete with neighboring cities. This, I repeat, was a short-sighted policy. When we consider that the supply of water for 350,000 inhabitants depended on a single conduit, and that conduit known to be out of repair, weak, and liable to give way, I cannot help thinking what a risk we ran, and how dilatory came our measures of relief. Surrounded as we are by salt water, what would become of Boston if our supplies were cut off for a single week, and what an immense amount of suffering would have been inflicted on our people?

The new conduit, connecting us with the Sudbury River, will be completed this year, and a full supply is secured, I will not say for all time, but for a long time ahead. This generation and the next will not be called upon to provide for any additional supply. I repeat, this work will be completed this year, but the expenditure of $4,000,000 for this purpose was opposed on the ground that it would make our taxes so burdensome that our taxpayers would not be able to bear up under the burden. It was opposed by men who make it a business to oppose every public improvement,--who can see nothing ahead but disaster and trouble. Have our taxpayers ever looked at the matter and compared the result with these predictions? I will do it for them. The rate of taxation for thirteen years has been as follows:--

	Per $1,000.		Per $1,000.
1876	$12.70	1869	$13.70
1875	13.70	1868	12.30
1874	15.60	1867	15.50
1873	12.80	1866	13.00
1872	11.70	1865	15.80
1871	13.10	1864	13.30
1870	15.30		

This year the rate of taxation will be about $13 per $1,000, so that while this expenditure of $4,000,000 has been going on, --an expenditure that was to bring such disaster on our taxpayers, --the average rate of taxation has been the smallest for thirteen years. I do not say that this result will always follow, but I will say, that when such a large expenditure of money was necessary for a great public improvement, it forced economy in the administration of city affairs; many of the sinecures and deadheads were cut off, and all expenditures more closely looked after.

The sewer question is now under consideration. Our engineers are at work on the plan proposed by the late commission, but we failed to meet this question until forced upon us, --until the filth of the Back Bay, and the South Bay, and the Charles-river flats, has almost made our best and most costly dwellings-houses untenantable. Is not this short-sighted policy? Can the metropolis of New England afford to be classed among the most unhealthy cities of the country? I hope this great improvement will be pushed forward by the Committee on Improved Sewerage. It should have been begun and completed ten years ago, before the South End and the Back Bay were filled up with costly dwellings. This work, I regret to say, will not be commenced this year, and it will be years before it is completed. Our taxpayers need not be alarmed about the cost, as the work will be distributed over so many years, the cost will be scarcely felt. This work will also meet with opposition from the men who oppose all public improvements, --the croakers of this generation, who can see nothing but disaster and ruin ahead, and who believe that Boston has ceased to grow.

For years the Park question has been under consideration. The citizens of Boston have been called upon several times to express their opinion of Parks, and that expression has always been emphatically in their favor; and yet, year after year, the City Council fails to make a beginning, and precious time and splendid opportunities have been lost. The same short-sighted policy that has interfered with our water supply, and with our sewerage, is in full force against Parks, and prevents this great improvement from making any progress. Parks are as much of a necessity for a large city like Boston at the present time, or as Boston will be in the future, as a good supply of water or

perfect sewerage, and I intend to discuss this question from this standpoint. Parks are a necessity now, and will be a still greater necessity in the future.

Our city is yet in its infancy. From its first settlement, upwards of two hundred years ago, it has grown up without any system. Streets and lanes have been laid out to suit the convenience of the parties for the time being, without any regard for future growth, and this system has been continued, with few exceptions, to the present time. Our suburbs are now being built up without any system, and, in many instances, are no improvement on Turn-again alley and Blind lane of one hundred and fifty years ago. Looking ahead twenty or twenty-five years has rarely been a consideration, and when considered, we have always failed to realize the growth of the city for any length of time. Succeeding town and city governments have had about as much as they could attend to in making improvements on the short-sightedness of their predecessors. We have been building up only to pull down a few years later, and the extensive improvements that are being forced upon the city show that our work is still incomplete. The Park Commissioners' report has been the only systematic plan that has ever been presented to lay out and improve our vacant land on a system commensurate with our future growth. This vacant land will be the future residence of our citizens when Boston proper will be devoted almost exclusively to business purposes, and now, when the cost is comparatively trifling, we still hesitate to lay it out on some systematic plan; we still fail to realize what Boston will be twenty-five or fifty years hence.

The city is still in its infancy, and yet we fail to see or provide for its future growth. The lessons of the past, the growth of the past, appear to be no guide for us. Is Boston to stand still, that we are so indifferent? There is nothing in the character of our people, in the enterprise and energy that have brought about so great a change as has taken place during the past one hundred and fifty years, that would warrant such a conclusion. Fifty years from this time our city will contain at least one million of inhabitants. If the percentage of increase is as large as during the past fifty years our population will be far beyond this figure. We may have occasional reverses, but all our leading cities must continue to prosper and grow rapidly. New York, before another century has passed away, will be the largest city in the world, and who that looks forward to her in that position but must think what a blessing her Central Park, and the new Parks now in progress,--the Morning Side Park, the Riverside Park and the East River Park,--will be, if considered only from a sanitary point? In this connection let me read you a short extract from the "New York Herald" of the 14th instant, as follows: "The bright and cheery weather yesterday drew from the crowded houses of the city thousands of toil-worn men and women to the verdant meadows and shady walks of Central Park. It is on this people's day that can be best appreciated the

blessings which this breathing-place confers on the dwellers in the crowded tenement houses of this city. In great streams the people poured in from all sides, and it was only necessary to watch them for a little while to become convinced that they enjoyed fully the health-giving beauties by which they were surrounded."

Philadelphia, Chicago, Brooklyn and Baltimore must continue to grow and prosper, and these cities will grow and prosper all the better from the wisdom and foresight that have secured to these cities such magnificent Parks. New York to-day, notwithstanding her Central Park, has one thousand men employed in laying out and completing the Riverside Park, and the men of New York are determined to make that city not only one of the most attractive in the country, but also to place within the reach of every citizen delightful places for health and recreation. It is claimed that the Morning Side, Riverside and East River Parks have natural advantages which are not to be matched by the suburbs of any city in Christendom. Is Boston to stand still and allow all the beautiful suburbs, now so easily to be obtained, all the vacant land now within our reach, the banks of the Charles river now within our grasp, without taking one step in advance to obtain them? I have no hesitation in saying that we have far better material to make our city attractive than New York, Philadelphia, or Baltimore, and the only difference between us is that while we hesitate to move, they long ago commenced, and are now completing the work.

I am decidedly of the opinion that now is the time to commence the work. If we fear that the entire scheme of the Park Commissioners is beyond our reach, let us commence with the inner line of parks, although we run the risk of losing the finest and cheapest Park of all--the West Roxbury Park--now about the geographical centre of the city. Land is cheaper than it is likely to be for years to come, and the present opportunity should not be lost. It is true that we have a great many unoccupied stores and dwellings, but no more, if so many, as New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, or other leading cities. The late depression has, in fact, been felt in all business centres. New York is not discouraged or dismayed by the depression, but is now creating new Parks that will cost more than the entire Boston scheme. Philadelphia has just opened, with imposing ceremonies, the Main Building on her Fairmount Park, and every person who visited the Centennial must remember the magnitude of that Main Building, which is to be retained there as a permanent structure. Is Boston to stand still? Has all our vitality and energy and enterprise taken its departure? London, Paris, and all the great cities of Europe are constantly expending large sums of money in improvements, because these cities have not yet ceased to grow or lost their vitality. A few years ago France was at the mercy of the German empire, when the indemnity she had to pay led many to think she would become bankrupt; but peace was no sooner

declared than her people went to work manfully to redeem their losses. The year following the war the city of Paris expended $25,000,000 for improvements, and Paris to-day is the most prosperous city in the world. Is Boston to stand still? If any member of the Board supposes that because we have a great many unoccupied stores and dwellings our growth is checked, he cannot be a very close observer of passing events. ...The estimated cost of the new buildings erected and the improvements made the past six years has amounted to $68,248,687, and the number of new buildings erected was six thousand five hundred and ninety. These improvements, covering a period of only six years, exceed in value the valuation of any other city in the Commonwealth, and are about twice the valuation of the city of Charlestown in 1875. These improvements exceed the entire valuation of Boston in 1830. These are no fancy figures, but are taken from the reports of the Inspector of Buildings. These facts show that we are not standing still; and because we have a large number of unoccupied stores and dwellings (not many more than is usually the case) is no good reason why we should become discouraged. If you want to keep them unoccupied, stop all your public improvements, and this result will be sure to follow. If you want to fill them up, make your city attractive.

I am convinced that the business depression that has been such a drawback on our prosperity for some years, has about taken its departure. Its marks are still visible, but there is now scarcely a branch of business that is not starting up on a sounder basis than for some years. The presidential question, so embarrassing to business the past year, has been settled. Our cotton crop, that was predicted would be a failure with free labor, has yielded a larger return than it ever did under the old system; our agricultural productions are of such magnitude that hundreds of vessels from Europe arrive in ballast to load with our surplus productions; nearly all branches of our manufacturing business are now comparatively prosperous, and, with the experience of the past few years, have a brighter future before them. With such immense resources, both mineral and agricultural, we cannot stand still. We cannot afford to go on as we have been going for ten years, giving our whole attention to destroying property. We must commence building up and laying out the city on some systematic plan, and no plan has ever been presented equal to the plan of the Park Commissioners. The opponents of Parks give some remarkable figures about the expense that will follow their adoption, but they fail to show the benefits that always result from such improvements,--work for the professional man, work for the mechanic, work for the laborer, a large increase of taxable property, and employment of surplus capital. The opponents of Parks also fail to consider what previous mistakes have cost the city. The money expended for widening streets, improving and redeeming proeprty allowed to be built up without any system, would pay for ten such Park schemes as has been laid out in the Commissioners' report. Let us take a glance at these figures:

Cost of laying out and widening streets	$24,916,785
Cost of Fort Hill improvement	1,575,000
Cost of Church-street district	1,178,491
Cost of Suffolk-street district	2,426,084
Cost of Northampton-street district	171,316
Total already expended	$30,267,676

The proposed improvements are:--

Atlantic avenue Commercial street School street Boylston street South street Portland street Hamilton place	$10,000,000

And if we go on making all the improvements contemplated, it is doubtful if the amount already expended and to be expended would fall far short of $50,000,000; all in consequence of want of system,--all in consequence of not looking ahead and providing for the wants of our large and increasing population.

I have said that we have had no systematic plan in laying out the city; but an exception might be made so far as the magnificent streets adjoining our Public Garden are concerned. For this improvement we are indebted more to a private corporation and private enterprise than any wisdom that has emanated from City Hall. To the Boston Water Power Company, more than to any other corporation, we are indebted for the filling up of the Back Bay, and I sometimes feel, when the members of this company are denounced as land speculators, that it would be well to consider what they have done for the city to make this spot so attractive. A large portion of our wealthy citizens now reside in that locality. Historical societies, art unions, schools of technology, private institutions of learning, the finest church edifices in the city or in the country, all are now to be found there, and the men who can go back twenty-five or thirty years can only have a conception of this vast improvement and how largely it has added to the wealth of the city. The Water Power Company has not only added to the wealth of the city, but it has given employment to our best architects, to our leading builders, to our mechanics and laboring men, because all this improvement has been the work of their creation. In this connection it would be well to consider the great increase of property in that neighborhood during the past twenty years, as follows:--

The assessed value of the Back Bay basin in 1855, including all the real estate assessed to the Boston Water Power Company, was	$1,100,000
Valuation in 1874	40,012,600
Increase in twenty years	$38,912,600
Exempt property	4,688,900
Taxable valuation	$34,223,700
Taxable increase	33,123,700

An increase of $33,000,000 in taxable property, yielding an annual income to the city of Boston of $500,000 per year. From a nuisance and an eyesore to our citizens, this territory has been made the most beautiful section of our city, paying a large percentage of our current expenses. It should also be remembered that all this building up, this $33,000,000 increase in our property, was the work of labor, gave employment to our workmen, and was distributed among them. While this improvement was going on, you found no loiterers about City Hall, appealing for work to keep them from becoming a charge on the city. I repeat, when workmen stand up and denounce these improvements, they denounce what is their great gain; for it was their hands that did the work, and it was among them that these $33,000,000 were distributed.

The increase of property within a circle of six miles of City Hall has been almost marvellous. Have the Aldermen ever looked into this matter, and noticed our wonderful increase in wealth and population? No country in the world, no State in the Union, can show a better record. If we go on increasing in the same proportion, all the vacant land in the neighborhood will soon be occupied. The whole population and valuation of Massachusetts in 1830, 1840 and 1875, as taken from the census returns at the State House, was as follows:--

	Population.	Valuation.
1830	610,408	$208,360,407
1840	737,700	299,878,329
1875	1,651,912	1,840,252,701

. . . These figures show how rapidly we have increased in wealth and population. In thirty-five years the population in a circle of six miles from the State House has increased over three-fold, and valuation has increased about ninefold, and this will give us some idea of this circle thirty-five years hence. The

largest increase of population has been in the suburbs. Roxbury, with a population of 9,089 inhabitants in 1840, now numbers 62,212 inhabitants. Dorchester, with a population of 4,875 inhabitants in 1840, now numbers 15,788 inhabitants. Brighton, with a population of 1,425 inhabitants in 1840, now numbers 6,200 inhabitants. Brookline, with a population of 1,365 inhabitants in 1840, now numbers 6,651 inhabitants. And this large increase has all taken place in the short space of thirty-five years. These figures show that vacant land in the suburbs is being rapidly occupied, and that there is no time to be lost if Parks are to be secured. The valuation of property now is thirteen times greater than in 1830, and eight times greater than in 1840. Are we to stand still for the next twenty-five or fifty years? Not if the figures of the past are the least indication of our future growth and prosperity. And are not the figures of the past the only true basis from which to estimate our future growth?

What surprises me most in relation to the Park movement is, that the working-men do not take a greater interest in pushing it forward. There has been no movement ever commenced or inaugurated by the city that will give so much employment to workmen. We expend $1,000,000 every year on our streets, but of this amount only one-third goes to workmen; the widening of streets may enrich the capitalist, but a small percentage of the cost goes to labor; but once establish your Parks, and the work of laying out and beautifying them is almost exclusively the work of labor. When thousands of able-bodied men are pressing for employment, as they have been for some two years past, I have thought what a pity it was that some of the proposed Parks had not been secured, so that we could give employment to some of this labor, so that we could have some place to set these men at work, instead of supporting them at the expense of the city, or at the expense of the charitable. The Street Commissioners were appealed to for some improvement that would enable us to give employment to men who were quite destitute, to enable them to bridge over the late depression in business, and they could only recommend a street improvement at South Boston. I say emphatically, that the adoption of the Park scheme would do more for labor than any other scheme ever proposed to the city. The Parks of the Commissioners would be the vineyards of the laboring man, and would also give his family, now crowded in narrow streets and tenement houses, a place for health and recreation.

But it is said that most of these Parks are placed beyond the reach of the poor man; that citizens from the North End, East Boston and Charlestown will not be benefited in the least. The West Roxbury Park, the largest Park of the Commissioners, far ahead of all other Parks in the country so far as natural beauty is concerned, is the farthest away from the centre of population, but at the same time is easily reached by horse-cars and steam railroads. It is more easily reached by the citizens of North End, East Boston and Charlestown than Fairmount Park in Philadelphia is reached by the mass of the people of that city;

and an estimate made in 1875 showed that Fairmount Park was visited by eleven million people in that year alone. This shows what value is placed upon this Park by the citizens of Philadelphia. The distance of a few miles does not prevent them from visiting it to the extent of eleven million in one year; and I repeat, that for natural advantages and beauty of scenery, it is far inferior to the West Roxbury Park. Let this Park once become the property of the city--the property of every citizen--and it would also be visited every year by millions of our people. The Central Park of New York is as far from the mass of the population of New York as the West Roxbury Park is from the people of the North End, and who ever heard a New-Yorker say that it was beyond his reach or out of the way? This extreme Park, now looked upon as beyond our reach, is very near the geographical centre of the city, and, in the course of years, if laid out as a Park, would be the most attractive spot in the country, surrounded as it must be by a large population. This Park of four hundred and eighty-five acres would cost the city about $1,250,000. It is already a Park, and very little money would be required for improvements. No expensive filling would have to be made--no expensive stone walls would have to be built--and this Park would, in fact, cost less than any of the other large Parks selected by the Commissioners. Nature has already prepared the scenery by the great variety of trees, the beautiful lawns, and the extensive views of all the surrounding country. No expensive grading would have to be done there, for that work has already been accomplished by the great landscape Architect on High. I repeat that the West Roxbury Park, about the geographical centre of the city, is the cheapest of all our Parks, notwithstanding its large area, and no scheme will be complete without it.

The Brighton Park, of 160 acres, costing less than $400,000, has also many natural advantages, is already a Park, and would cost very little for improvements. If the land was secured, scarcely a dollar need be expended upon it for many years to come. It is also within easy reach of all our citizens.

The Jamaica Park, including the Jamaica Pond, the only natural sheet of fresh water in the city, is also a Park of great beauty, and would cost the city very little for improvements. I have no hesitation in saying that it should be secured at once to preserve it from the further encroachments of the ice-houses that are now increasing around it, destroying trees that would take years to replace. The City Council have visited this spot, and can judge for themselves. Here we have a reservoir of water, supplied by natural springs, beautifully located, superior to any reservoir the Water Board could build for $1,000,000, and year after year we allow its natural beauty to be destroyed. I say, Mr. Mayor, that it is a shame to hesitate in this matter. The Park Commissioners ask only $500,000 to secure it, and but a small portion of this amount would be wanted for years, as arrangements could be made with most of the principal abutters

to occupy their estates during life. I believe it will be a clear gain in dollars and cents to the city to secure it now. The old aqueduct corporation now supply a portion of Roxbury with water from this pond; come into competition with the Cochituate water, and supply our citizens cheaper than the Water-Board rates. This company are willing to sell out their rights and privileges to the city on very reasonable terms, although the income derived from water alone is about $15,000 to $20,000 per year. I repeat again, the natural beauty of this pond is fast being destroyed by the encroachments of ice-houses, and at any rate the borders of the pond should be secured, and the destruction of the trees put a stop to.

The Back Bay Park and the South Bay Park have their advantages, and could not be left out of the plan without injuring it as a whole. It should also be remembered that on the Back Bay there is now more costly buildings in process of erection than in any other part of our city; and the South Bay Park is placed in the midst of a dense population. The creation of both these Parks would tend to abate nuisances that must, sooner or later, be abated, if we have any regard for the health of our citizens, and would add largely to our taxable valuation.

The Charles River Embankment, about which so many extravagant estimates have been made for the purpose of putting a stop to this improvement, it will be seen, from a careful estimate of our city engineer, is not such a costly affair as has been represented, when we consider all its advantages. We would have sixty-nine acres of land within five or fifteen minutes' walk of our densest population, reaching up to the North End of the city, on the borders of one of the finest rivers in New England. The site of this Park once secured, the work of completing might go on for a long period of years, and would come so gradually that it would be scarcely noticed in our tax bills. The expense of filling up might be materially lessened by making it a dumping-place for all the ashes and dry dirt of the city. With its driveway of nearly three miles along the borders of the river, and within so easy reach of the mass of our population, it would be a place of great resort. As it stands now it is simply a nuisance, and a nuisance that must sooner or later be abated.

I have thus alluded briefly to the largest Parks selected by the Commissioners, and will detain the Board but a few minutes longer. It may be argued that the scheme is altogether too large for the city; but the same argument was used when New York was about to establish Parks. Mayor Kingsland, who was Mayor of New York in 1851, became interested in a series of articles written by Andrew Jackson Downing, of Newburg, on the subject of Parks, and it was the interest created by those papers that led to the establishment of the Central Park in 1857. Mayor Kingsland thought that a Park of one hundred and sixty acres would be sufficient for the city, at that time with a population of 500,000 inhabitants; and Mr. Downing fixed upon four hundred

acres. Neither of the gentlemen had the most remote idea that the city would grow to its present magnitude. The first Board of Commissioners, a board distinguished for its ability, fixed upon one thousand acres; and this vast domain is now in possession of the city, and is used by millions of New-Yorkers without a cent of cost. As an instance of the short-sighted frugality that sometimes takes possession of city councils, when the City Hall of New York was built, the building committee of the City Council determined that it would be useless to waste white marble on the rear of the building, since that side would only be seen by persons living in the suburbs. The city now extends eight miles above the old city hall.

I repeat, Mr. Mayor, that we have failed to meet the wants of our people. While we have been growing wealthier day after day, we have failed to realize that the accumulation of wealth is not the only thing that is needful for a great city. One of the leading physicians of the city told me only a few weeks ago that, with Parks and improved sewerage, the death-rate of the city could be reduced twenty-five per cent. What, then, does all our wealth amount to if year after year the health of our citizens is lost sight of? What does all our boasted prosperity amount to, when our city, year after year, is becoming the most unhealthy of all large cities? His Honor the Mayor, after taking the oath of office, and impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, told us in a few brief but suggestive words, "Boston is now one of the most unhealthy of the large cities. I appeal for the truth of this statement to the eloquence of facts." These words have been ringing in my ears ever since: "Boston is now one of the most unhealthy of the large cities." What have we done? What has the City Council done to prevent this result? Nothing; absolutely nothing. While accumulating wealth we have forgot, and still forget, to provide for the health of our citizens. There is nothing in our climate, nothing in our surroundings, that would lead to such a result, except that we are so bent on accumulating money we overlook this important matter. The only breathing-place we have, the few acres that comprise Boston Common, has become so sacred that millions would not purchase one foot of it, and there is no other spot our citizens can go to without becoming trespassers and intruders. We have failed to make improvements commensurate with our growth and prosperity; and how much longer is this short-sighted policy to continue? This is the important question that this City Council has to decide, and we shall only take a departure in the right direction when we adopt the order now before us and commence the work that our citizens have so many times demanded and indorsed.

Last year, when this question was before the Board, every Alderman, with scarcely an exception, was in favor of Parks, but only two actually voted for the order to establish them. It was sent back to the Commissioners to bond the land, to do something that was altogether impracticable and impossible.

The object of this was to defeat the order. I hope this year we will have a square vote upon it. The Commissioners have displayed admirable judgment so far, and the matter can be safely intrusted to them. There is no possible way the city can be defrauded. Every movement is under the control of the City Council, and the Commissioners believe that it will take some years to secure the land after they have the power to purchase, as they intend to proceed slowly, cautiously, and pay only what the land is actually worth in cash. The advantage, it seems to me, is now almost exclusively on the side of the city. Land is more depressed than at any time for years, and parties who hold this property will have to negotiate at a time when high valuations cannot be sustained. I apprehend no trouble on the part of the Commissioners obtaining the land on the very lowest valuations. They know every foot of land included in their report. They have given an extraordinary amount of time and labor and attention to the subject, and have done their work so thoroughly and understand it so well they cannot be deceived. I feel that the committee on the part of the City Council, who have taken occasion to visit all the Parks selected, although they may differ about some things, will fully indorse this statement in relation to the work of the Commissioners. Their work was a work of honor, and no work has ever been more faithfully performed. Their labor was in the interest and for the benefit of all our citizens, high and low, rich and poor alike, and looks solely to the future welfare and prosperity of our city.

My respected associate on the committee, the Councilman from the Charlestown District, who submitted the minority report No. 1, has made some extraordinary statements. He says, "Were it not for a few landholders and speculators, some of whom are not even citizens of Boston, the Park question would not have been brought before this City Government, who were elected on principles of retrenchment and reform." What are the facts? The subject was brought before the City Council eight years ago, and a joint special committee was appointed to consider it. It has been before every City Council since, and last year the subject was referred to the present City Government. His Honor the Mayor, in his inaugural address, brought the matter again before the City Council, as previous mayors had done before him, and the subject was again referred to a special committee. Now, is his Honor the Mayor the agent of landholders and speculators, and have previous Mayors for eight years past also been the agents of landholders and speculators? He says this is a City Government elected on principles of retrenchment and reform. I believe he has voted against every measure of retrenchment that has been proposed, but is very willing to expend $250,000 or $300,000 in the Mystic Valley. Park-ways also appear to be very objectionable to the Councilman from Charlestown. Can a city be built up and laid out without streets and leading avenues? The Park-ways of the Commissioners are nothing more

nor less than leading avenues, that must sooner or later be laid out, Parks or no Parks. These avenues have been well considered by the Commissioners. They circle the city from the North End to Dorchester, and the expense of laying them out would be very small, as the material is to be found around these Park-ways to grade and make them perfect. The gentleman in objecting to Park-ways--styled such very appropriately by the Commissioners--is evidently one hundred and fifty years behind the times. I can imagine with what pleasure he would have laid out Crooked alley, Flounder lane and Elbow lane, one hundred and fifty years ago. But I would ask this gentleman, if a city can be laid out and built up without streets and leading avenues, or Park-ways if you please to call them such; or does he think it best to go back to the lanes and alleys of one hundred and fifty years ago? When he winds up with "deserted wharves and grass-grown streets." I am not surprised that he recommended the whole subject to the next City Government. It was evidently too much for him.

The minority report of the Councilman from the West Roxbury District is carefully considered and written. The Parks that he recommends are worthy of all that he has said so well about them, and it only shows the wisdom of the Commissioners' selection. He also appears to be alarmed at the possible expenditure covering a period of thirty years; but the adoption of the scheme he recommends would destroy a well-considered plan. In the language of the majority report, "The several parts of the system have been so chosen and combined that the value of any one part taken in connection with the others is very much greater than it would be if standing alone." I am satisfied that he believes this as much as any of the majority, but fails to see that these Parks will cost the city scarcely a dollar, if we take the experience of the creation of Parks in other cities as a criterion or a basis. This has been demonstrated fully. I plant myself on the experience of other cities in the creation of Parks, and this experience is far safer than his imaginary figures. I believe that what has been accomplished in other cities can be repeated here.

On the 31st of December, 1875, the city of New York had expended on Central Park	$30,779,636
Received from increase of taxation, due to the Park, Dec. 31st, 1874	24,994,731
Net amount of outlay	5,784,905
In 1875 the city received in taxes in excess of actual valuation before the Park was created	5,182,658
In 1876 taxes in excess of valuation	4,042,029
	$10,224,687
Deduct net amount of outlay	5,784,905
Balance in favor of the city	$ 5,439,782

Will the finances of the city permit the commencement of this scheme of Parks? I admit that our debt is now large, but we have also large resources and assets. The discussion of our financial condition has been so recent, it is useless to go over the ground again. Our sinking funds, with their prospective accumulations, are now large enough to pay our entire debt at maturity, not including the water debt. This fact is beyond a doubt. Thirty-year bonds of the city will sell at ten and twelve per cent. premium. It was only a few weeks ago one of our bankers sold $500,000 at 111 to a life insurance company. The premium that could now be obtained for a thirty-year loan, if placed in a sinking fund, with the betterments, would pay the Park bonds and debt at maturity, to say nothing of the revenue to be obtained by the increased value of property that always follows their creation. The High School that we are about to erect is provided for in the order. The valuable property now used for high-school purposes will be nearly, if not quite, sufficient to meet the debt. Atlantic avenue should be completed in justice to the North End of the city, and will cost about $1,000,000. I do not believe in the street widenings that have been so extensively carried on; but this work should be completed, because we are already committed to it, and our commerce demands it. I regret, in this connection, that so many citizens at the North End have arrayed themselves against Parks, because they imagine that the Park scheme interferes with this improvement; but I am satisfied that if Atlantic avenue is defeated or delayed, it will be defeated by the men who oppose Parks, because they oppose every improvement without regard to its necessity.

These are the only large expenditures that appear to me necessary for the next ten years at least, except the Intercepting Sewer and Parks, and instead of increasing our debt, I believe that it will be reduced, even if all these improvements are carried out. There is now a margin of $7,000,000 over and above the limit allowed by the act limiting city indebtedness. The debt maturing, and already provided for by our sinking funds, during the next ten years, amounts to $12,000,000. Some of the sinking funds are so arranged that a portion of the debt will be paid or provided for before maturity, so that we have a margin of at least $20,000,000 to carry on necessary improvements during this period, and still keep within the limit allowed by law, based on present valuations. I am confident that we shall cancel debt faster than it can possibly be created, with the High School, Atlantic Avenue, the Intercepting Sewer, and the Park scheme in full progress. Our general debt is about $28,000,000, averaging some fifteen years, with a sinking fund of $13,800,000 to meet it; and it requires no great financial ability to decide that this sinking fund, mostly six per cent. city bonds, with its accumulated interest, betterments and other resources, will take care of this debt. The water debt is $12,770,000, with a sinking fund of $1,600,000. Most of

this debt runs from twenty-five to thirty years, and with the increase of the sinking fund during that time, $100,000 raised yearly by taxation, with its natural increase, would take care of the water debt at maturity. Financially we are in a condition to commence and carry on these improvements, and taxation will not be so high as during the past ten years, unless we have ceased to grow,--a fallacy that no sensible man will indorse.

While we have been talking about Parks, the city of Albany has commenced and created one. As it was the last Park of any magnitude established, it may be well to show the results. The cost of this Park, as per treasurer's report of January 1, 1877, was $793,480. The increased assessed value of property in consequence of the Park yielded an annual revenue of $82,821, a sum that exceeded by $49,470 the annual interest charge on account of the Park, including maintenance; so that the remainder of the city was relieved from taxation yearly in the sum of $49,470, which, as the Treasurer remarks, if it could be set aside for that purpose, would extinguish the Park debt in twelve years. The Treasurer also says that, during the winter of 1875-6, a winter of unusual distress, there was given employment, in the construction of the Boulevard, to an average of 150 men and many teams, men needy and in positive want; this fact the working-men of Boston would do well to remember. I will not tax the Board with other figures. The same results have followed in other cities where Parks are established, and this experience is better than the imaginary figures of the minority reports. All the leading cities in the country have established Parks but Boston. Second-class cities, like Albany, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Columbus and others, have established them. Is this creditable to our enterprise? Boston, to-day, is the wealthiest city in the country on the basis of population, and Boston, to-day, is far behind other cities in providing for the health, the recreation and pleasure of her citizens.

Apologizing to the Board for detaining them so long, I will say, in conclusion, that my only excuse is the importance of the subject. I think I have shown that Boston is not a dead city so far as business prosperity is concerned; that there is no good reason why great public improvements should be stopped; that we have increased remarkably in wealth and population; that all our public improvements have been behind the times, behind the enterprise of our citizens; that the City Government have failed to realize the growth or the wants of our people; and that if, after the experience of the past, we fail to improve our vacant land on some systematic plan, we are greater failures than previous City Governments.